In 5 years

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In 5 years

by lumosatnight

Summary

In 3 minutes and 27 seconds, Astoria Greengrass will literally fall head over heels for Anthony Goldstein.

Notes

Thank you AlihotsyTotsy for the speedy beta!

Winner of Best Writing and Best Romance!
Voted Top 5 Best Use of Trope!

See the end of the work for more notes

In 5 years, 10 days, and 4 hours, Anthony will stand in front of a grave, their family and friends gathered behind him. He will be wearing all black.

His Great-great-grand-aunt from New York will be there, a gloved hand resting on his shoulder, her white curls pinned in the styles of old. She will not mention the tears that stream down his cheeks, nor the ring that he clutches to his chest. She will not need to be a mind-reader to know what he is thinking, to feel how he is feeling.

There will be speeches and hymns and prayers, a reception afterwards with wine as red as blood. One by one, they will shake his hand, pat his back, and offer an embrace full of false comfort. One by one, they will return to their own lives. They will leave him with a freshly turned grave and a house full of slowly wilting flowers.

At the end of the day, Daphne will give him a small, tired smile, her eyes rimmed with red. He will not smile back.

In 5 years, 10 days, and 3 hours, Anthony will be locked in a bathroom stall. He will hear the click of heels on the tiled floor and the sharp rap on the door.

“Anthony, come on. It’s time.” Daphne will sound exasperated, yet she will not leave when it takes him too long to respond.

“I just — I need a minute.” He will suck in a breath. His head will spin, and his chest will ache like there isn’t room for his still-beating heart.

Daphne will sit on the other side of the door, and just her presence alone will be comforting. They will sit like that for an indeterminate amount of time, not talking, simply breathing. Eventually, Anthony's chest will stop aching enough for him to stand. He will wipe the wetness from his eyes and open the door.

In 5 years, 3 days, and 12 hours, Anthony will roll over and come face to face with an empty bed. The silence will be stifling, the darkness overwhelming. He will wander the flat in only his boxers and a pair of fuzzy pink socks.

He will open the drawer that he promised never to open and lay the photographs across the dining room table. Lit by candlelight, he will go through memory after memory, savouring each of her smiles. He will finally let the tears fall.

He will fall asleep by the window under the still-blooming flowers. Even in his dreams, he will be thinking about her.

In exactly 5 years, Anthony will be halfway through his shift when his ring will go cold. The chill will travel up his arm, the feeling of ice rushing through his veins, and he will know something is terribly wrong. He will rush home, but he will be too late. She will already be as cold as his ring.

In 4 years, 9 months, and 25 days, Astoria will be lying in their bed, too weak to move. Anthony will fetch her some water and some food, carefully setting them on the side table. A picture in one of the frames will catch his eye.

"It's from our first date," she will croak. Her lips will be pale and dry, and he will still want to kiss them.

The photograph will be of her and him dancing in the street, the wind in her hair, the leaves swirling around them.

"Best date I've ever had." He will try to smile but will not succeed.

She will reach for his hand, using her feeble strength to squeeze tightly. He will bring her hand to his lips and kiss each fingertip.

"Me too," she will say.

In 4 years, 3 months, and 19 days, Astoria will be napping in the bedroom while her sister sits at their dining room table.

Daphne will be tired, frustrated, and so unbearably kind.

"Just enjoy the time you have left."

She will squeeze his hand. It will feel wrong, so very wrong.

In 4 years, 1 month, and 5 days, Anthony will knock on Hermione Granger's front door. It will be years since he last saw her, but he will remember she was the best, and he will need the best.

The door will open, and Harry Potter will look out. Anthony will be invited inside, and Ron Weasley will come shuffling along, dressing gown hanging open at the front. Hermione will stumble in last, barely awake yet gaze focused.

They will not be able to help him. Even with all that raw power, all that unwavering persistence, all that simmering intellect, they will send him away.

It will become a pattern, doors closing in his face and pitying expressions as he walks away. He will lose time at work. He will ask too many questions to the wrong Healers.

And still, he will keep trying to find a cure.

In 3 years, 5 months, and 11 days, Astoria will receive a letter in the mail. Her face will go white, and she will need to sit down while Anthony fetches her a glass of water. Rubbing circles into her back, she will tell him of a curse. A family curse so strong, so vile, that she has dealt with it all her life. A curse that thirsts for her blood and has finally come to demand payment.

Anthony's ring will flash cold, a stinging slap of awareness. He will bundle her into his arms and tuck her into bed, softly kissing her forehead. He will not sleep that night, planning and studying and searching, reading by the waning candlelight. He can stop this; he knows he can.

He will circumvent fate.

In 2 years, 7 months, and 14 days, Anthony will slip a ring onto Astoria's finger, a beautiful sparkling diamond. She will tilt it this way and that. It will be pretty but not quite right.

They will move down the case and try at least twenty more. Finally, a beautiful sapphire will catch his eye, a colour in between blue and purple, a mix of the sky and the flowers in their window that she diligently waters every day. He will buy a band to match hers, and they will leave the shop, hands intertwined, their rings fitting together.

His ring will be warm, as warm as his skin underneath, as warm as the flush on her cheeks whenever she smiles.

He will gently rub his thumb over her ring and know that this is the one.

In 2 years, 5 months, and 18 days, Anthony will become a full-fledged Healer. He will get his exam results in the mail, a thick envelope signed by the Chief Healer and the Head of St Mungos. He will immediately go to find Astoria, waving the certificate around, and she will set down her own letter to join in his joy, jumping up so that he can catch her. She will wrap her legs around his waist and snog him senseless in the hall.

He will spin them around, and in his moment of excitement, he will blurt out, “Let's get married!”

She will pause, then smile. Snogging will turn into something more, will turn into an all-night endeavour. They will eat ramen in the bed, snuggling close and sharing salty kisses, neither of them wanting to leave the heat of the other.

He will not have a ring, nor a job, but he will have her, and that will be enough.

In 11 months, 4 days, and 3 hours, Anthony will carry Astoria over the threshold of the doorway. She will smack his chest, a playful pout on her pretty pink lips. Anthony will lean down to kiss them because he is a man, but he is only so strong.

Box by box, the empty flat will become their new home. He will place his mug next to hers in the cupboard. Their toothbrushes will stand side by side on the bathroom sink.

They will get distracted in the bedroom, the pillows still in their protective wrappers, the blankets still in a box in the kitchen. He will bend her over the dresser and trace down her body with his lips. She will wear his mark for days, refusing to cover her neck. It will be very distracting, and by the end of the week, they will have christened every room.

He will watch her puttering in the living room, wearing only his T-shirt and a pair of fuzzy pink socks. He will want to keep her forever, mark her in a more permanent way. He will have known this for a while, but somehow moving in together will make it more real.

In 6 days, 4 hours, and 22 minutes, Anthony will roll over in the bed and come face to face with a sleeping Astoria. She will be naked except for a thin sheet pooling around her freckled shoulder. He will remember last night when his lips traced the same path as her freckles, when he learned the curves of her body, felt the swell of her breasts, for the first time.

He will gently cup her face in his hand, and her eyelids will flutter. Her eyelashes will brush his hand, soft as a butterfly’s wing, shining golden in the morning light.

“Beautiful,” he will whisper, the word getting lost in the birds’ morning song.

He will fall back asleep, wishing to wake up like this every day.

In 5 days, 6 hours, and 45 minutes, Anthony will grab Astoria around the waist and spin them both around in the middle of the deserted street. The hour will be late, the sun just setting on the horizon. The wind will make her skirt dance and her petticoat dip and twirl. He will bend down, she will reach up and card her fingers through his tousled hair. Their lips will meet, and he will be lost in her.

In 5 days, 6 hours, and 17 minutes, Astoria will lean across the table and kiss Anthony for the first time. It will be short and sweet and taste like coffee and caramel. They will share a look, so warm

and filled with possibility that it ignites the air around them.

They will escape outside hand in hand, the autumn leaves swirling around them.

In 5 days, 2 hours, and 5 minutes, Anthony will sit across from Astoria in a quaint cafe in Muggle London. He will order an overpriced drink, which she will pay for. They will talk for hours, gradually leaning closer. His foot will bump hers under the table, and neither of them will pull away.

He will stare at her lips for longer than is polite. She will notice. It will only make her smile wider.

In 3 minutes and 27 seconds, Astoria will literally fall head over heels for Anthony. He will catch her, letting his clipboard clatter to the floor and taking a painful elbow to the ribs.

She will apologise profusely, stumbling over her words while he tries not to think about the blooming bruises. He will agree to her demands to let her buy him a coffee if only to stop her embarrassment. He's never been very good with handling other people's emotions, but as a Healer-in-training, he's working on it.

He will escort her to her appointment, and they will part ways, glances lingering and touches fleeting. The slip of paper with her Floo address will burn hot and tempting in his pocket for the rest of his shift.

Right now, Anthony calls the next patient from the hospital waiting room. He's twelve hours into a sixteen-hour shift and in dire need of caffeine. He also needs a hot shower after a patient sneezed all over his robes.

"Astoria Greengrass!"

A woman approaches, tucking a hair behind her ear. When she looks up at him, she smiles, cheeks flushing with warmth. He can't help but smile back.

End Notes

The formatting is from this fabulous Jalex story in the Wizards of Waverly Place fandom that I read and couldn't get out of my head. I thought it would be super fun to play with the reverse timeline. I hope you didn't cry too much while reading 😭😭. Come say hi on Tumblr @lumosatnight!

Written for Untagged Fest 2024!
🍂 Characters: Anthony Goldstein, Astoria Greengrass
🍂 Genres: Romance
🍂 Tropes: Meet-Cute, Healer/Patient

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!